

Message Text

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ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 MCT-01 OPR-02 PM-05 NSC-05
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USIA-06 AID-05 FBO-02 /067 W
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R 240750Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
SECSTATE WASHDC 7104

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ABU DHABI 3516

DEPT FOR SY AND NEA/ARP

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: ASEC
SUBJECT: THREAT ASSESSMENT - UAE

REF: KUWAIT 5277

1. SUMMARY: INFORMATION AND COMMENTS REGARDING CURRENT THREAT ASSESSMENT TO OFFICIAL USG PERSONNEL IN ABU DHABI AND DUBAI HAS BEEN COLLECTED FROM ALL APPROPRIATE ELEMENTS OF THIS MISSION. OUR CONCLUSION IS THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN POTENTIAL THREAT TO PERSONNEL AND PROPERTY DURING PAST YEAR AS CONSEQUENCY OF (A) RISING POLITICAL TENSIONS IN MODERATE MIDEAST STATES AS PALESTINIAN EXTREMISTS AND OTHER "REJECTIONIST" ELEMENTS ACT TO OPPOSE MOVEMENT TOWARD COMPROMISE PEACE SETTLEMENT; (B) INCREASED INCIDENCE OF CRIME, INCLUDING HOUSE-BREAKING AND CRIMINAL ASSAULT AGAINST WESTERN WOMEN AND CHILDREN; AND (C) DETERIORATED WILLINGNESS OR ABILITY OF LOCAL SECURITY FORCES TO PROVIDE SUSTAINED AND ADEQUATE SECURITY PROTECTION.

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2. POLITICAL TERRORISM. THERE HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT AND DRAMATIC INCREASE IN POTENTIAL THREAT FROM PALESTINIAN TERRORISTS DURING PAST FEW MONTHS. POWER OF SUCH GROUPS TO UNDERTAKE ACTIONS AFFECTING UAE WAS DEMONSTRATED BY HIJACKING OF LUTTHANSA AIRCRAFT FROM EUROPE TO DUBAI IN OCTOBER 1977 BY FOUR-MEMBER TEAM ASSOCIATED WITH PALESTINIAN EXTREMEIST

SPLINTER GROUP IN ALIGNMENT WITH BAADER-MEINHOF GANG IN WEST GERMANY AND BY ASSACDNATION ATTEMPT AT ABU DHABI AIRPORT OCTOBER 25, 1977, IN WHICH UAE CABINET MINISTER DIED. WHILE NEITHER ACTION WAS AIMED SPECIFICALLY AT UAE OR AT AMERICAN PERSONNEL, LATTER ACTION DEMONSTRATED ABILITY OF PALESTINIAN GROUPS TO DEPLOY TERRORISTS INTO EMIRATES. DESPITE SUBSEQUENT STEPS TAKEN BY UAE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AUTHORITIES TO TIGHTEN UP INTERNAL SECURITY, INCLUDING NEW RESTRICTIONS ON ENTRY INTO UAE BY PALESTINIANS, REJECTIONIST RADICALS INCLUDING PFLP, PDFLP, AND WADI HADDAD GROUP CONTINUE TO BE PRESENT IN THIS COUNTRY. MOREOVER, AS DEMONSTRATED BY DC. 14 BOMBING OF EGYPTIAN AIR TRAVEL AGENCY IN SHARJA, RECENT RISE IN INTRA-ARAB TENSIONS AS CONSEQUENCE OF SADAT INITIATIVES TOWARD ISRAEL AND WIDE-SPREAD BELIEF THAT USG SUPPORTS AND ENCOURAGES THIS EGYPTIAN ACTION MAY INSPIRE BOTH PALESTINIAN AND OTHER ARAB HARDLINE GROUPS TO UNDERTAKE ACTS OF TERRORISM AGAINST US AS WELL AS EGYPTIAN AND OTHER TARGETS CONSIDERED SYMPATHETIC TOWARD PEACE SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL. EMBASSY IS MOREOVER IN POSSESSION OF INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION WHICH INDICATES THAT US OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE INSTALLATIONS AND PERSONNEL IN UNSPECIFIED LOWER GULF STATES MAY INDEED BE INTENDED TARGETS OF TERRORISTS OPERATIONS MOUNTED BY SUCH ELEMENTS.

3. INCIDENCE OF CRIME. DURING THE PAST YEAR THE INCIDENCE OF ORDINARY CRIME, PARTICULARLY CRIMINAL ASSAULT AND RAPE, HAS INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY, ESPECIALLY IN ABU DHABI. ACCURATE
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STATISTICS HAVE NOT BEEN MAINTAINED OR RELEASED BY UAE POLICE AUTHORITIES, BUT KNOWN CASES OF RAPE OR ATTEMPTED RAPE INVOLVING MEMBERS OF EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN COMMUNITY (INCLUDING ONE EMBASSY OFFICER IN ABU DHABI) TOTALLED NINETEEN DULANG FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1977. OTHER CASES OF BREAKING INTO PRIVATE DWELLINGS IN WHICH VALUABLES WERE TAKEN AND YOUNG CHILDREN MOLESTED OR THREATENED HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTED IN NEIGHBORHOODS IN WHICH US PERSONNEL RESIDE. IN PAST TWO WEEKS EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY HAS BEEN FURTHER SHAKEN BY DISAPPEARANCE AND PRESUMED ABDUCTION OF 7-YEAR OLD DAUGHTER OF ENGLISH BANK EMPLOYEE. IN THOSE CASES WHERE SUSPECTS HAVE BEEN APPREHENDED, TRIED, AND SENTENCED TO PUNISHMENT (USALLY BY WHIPPING, IMPRISONMENT, AND DEPORTATION) OFFENDERS HAVE BEEN FOUND TO BE MEMBERS OF SIZABLE AND OVERWHELMINGLY MALE IMMIGRANT LABOR POPULATION WHICH IN ABU DHABI AND DUBAI PROBABLY ACCOUNTS FOR FOUR-FIFTHS OF TOTAL POPULATION. WIDE-SPREAD ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, ONLY PARTIALLY CONTROLLED BY IMPLEMENTATION THIS OCTOBER OF NEW IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS AND STRICTER ATTEMPTS AT ENFORCEMENT ALONG BORDERS, HAS CONTRIBUTED TO PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL CONTROL IN EMIRATES.

4. STATE OF SECURITY PROTECTION. THREAT AGAINST EMBASSY CHANCERY AND US PERSONNEL CONTINUES BE EXACERBATED BY

PHYSICAL AND PERSONNEL DEFICIENCIES OVER WHICH POST HAS LITTLE OR NO CONTROL. PHYSICAL LAYOUT AND LOCATION OF CHANCERY, LOCATED ON TOP FLOOR OF STRUCTURE BUILT AS RESIDENTIAL APARTMENT BUILDING, OFFERS PROBLEMS IN CONTROL OF BUILDING WHICH IS UNGUARDED AND OPEN TO PUBLIC BELOW FLOOR OCCUPIED BY EMBASSY. EMBASSY IS CURRENTLY ATTEMPTING TO IMPROVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN CHANCERY AND IN DUBAI OFFICE AS RECOMMENDED FROM TIME TO TIME BY RSS AND RSO. HOWEVER, WE ARE FINDING LOCAL CONTRACTING FIRMS LESS THAN EAGER TO BID OR TAKE ON SMALL TYPE JOBS WHICH EMBASSY REQUIRES. THIS HAS RESULTED IN EXTENSIVE DELAYS IN IMPLEMENTING PHYSICAL CHANGES/IMPROVEMENTS RECOMMENDED.

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5. IN ADDITION, EMBASSY HAS SERVICES OF ARMED LOCAL POLICE OFFICERS WHO MAN THREE POSTS: ONE CONTROLLING ENTRY TO FLOOR ON WHICH CHANCERY IS LOCATED, ANOTHER OUTSIDE USIS OFFICE ON FIRST FLOOR OF SAME BUILDING, AND THIRD AT AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE. FIRST AND THIRD POSITIONS ARE MANNED 24 HOURS DAILY, SECOND DURING WORKING HOURS ONLY. THESE POLICEMEN HAVE INSTRUCTIONS TO SEARCH NOT ONLY PACKAGES AND HANDBAGS BUT TO CONDUCT BODY SEARCH OF MALE VISITORS AS WELL. THIS SERVES AS SOMETHING OF A DETERRENT TO TERRORIST ATTACKS. HOWEVER, QUALITY AND DEPENDABILITY OF POLICE PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO THESE TASKS LEAVES MUCH TO BE DESIRED. FREQUENTLY THOSE ASSIGNED TO CHANCERY AND TO USIS OFFICES HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED BE ABSENT FROM THEIR POSTS OR ASLEEP ON DUTY. MOST ARE POORLY TRAINED IN

SECURITY WORK, OFTEN ILLITERATE EVEN IN ARABIC, AND VIRTUALLY NONE SPEAK ENGLISH. ONE WAS FOUND WHO COULD NOT EVEN USE A TELEPHONE* EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE IMPROVEMENT IN QUALITY OF SECURITY PROVIDED HAVE USUALLY FOUNDERED DUE TO SERIOUS DEFICIENCIES OF LOCAL POLICE FORCES (MORE SO IN ABU DHABI THAN IN DUBAI), POOR QUALITY OF MOST POLICE RECRUITS, AND PERSONNEL

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SHORTAGES WHICH HAVE LATELY BEEN AGGRAVATED BY STEPS UNDERTAKEN TO STRENGTHEN SECURITY AT AIRPORT, OTHER PORTS OF ENTRY, AND AROUND PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND SENIOR OFFICIALS FOLLOWING TERRORISTS INCIDENTS MENTIONED PARA 2 ABOVE. IF ANYTHING, SECURITY PROVIDED HAS DETERIORATED SOMEWHAT FROM LAST YEAR WITH ABSENCE OF FOLLOW-ON POLICE CAR PROVIDED PREVIOUS AMERICAN AMBASSADOR ON A PERIODIC BASIS. EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH CLOSER LIAISON AND CONTACT WITH LOCAL SECURITY PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTED BUT SO FAR WITHOUT SATISFACTORY RESULTS.

6. ECONOMIC FACTORS: EMIRATES ARE VERY PROSPEROUS AND THERE SEEMS LITTLE IMMEDIATE LIKELIHOOD OF THERE OCCURRING SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRISIS OR SOCIAL UPRISINGS THAT MIGHT ENGENDER THREAT TO US PERSONNEL. WILLINGNESS OF UAE LEADERSHIP TO USE APPROXIMATELY ONE FIFTH OF ITS ANNUAL OIL REVENUE FOR AID TO ARAB AND OTHER NATIONALISTS LIBERATION CAUSES IN AFRICA HAS PROBABLY BEEN ONE REASON WHY THERE HAVE NOT BEEN MORE INSTANCES OF TERRORISM DIRECTED AGAINST LOCAL TARGETS. BOOM ECONOMIC SITUATION HAS TENDED TO ATTRACT TO EMIRATES SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND FOREIGN WORKERS, MOST OF WHOM HAVE FOUND READY EMPLOYMENT BUT WHOSE PRESENCE AND ABILITY HITHERTO TO ESCAPE CLOSE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTROLS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO BOTH TERRORIST AND ORDINARY CRIMINAL THREATS MENTIONED ABOVE.

7. MILITARY SECTOR. THERE IS NO THREAT FROM MILITARY SECTOR AT THIS TIME ALTHOUGH CURRENT INCREASE IN TENSIONS ALONG UAE-OMAN BORDERS DUE TO TERRITORIAL DISPUTE PRESENTS POTENTIAL IF STILL RELATIVELY LOW RISKS TO US PERSONNEL TRAVELLING BETWEEN THOSE COUNTRIES OR IN BORDER AREAS. DICKMAN

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